

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MAPPING INPUT WITH DISPLAY HAVING COLOR
HIGHLIGHT

FIELD OF INVENTION

5 This invention relates to providing a graphical user interface, and more particularly to providing input selection through an input device that is associated with a color highlight appearing at a display.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Program control of a CPU, e.g. a in personal computer, is frequently driven by user inputs via a keyboard or other discrete input device. A key, sometimes called a button, or keypad, often has a preprinted number, letter or symbol appearing on it. This provides a user with an understanding of a function that the key is generally supposed to trigger.

A function of a key may vary according to the state of the CPU, also known as the context of the CPU. For example, pushing a key denoted as 'Caps Lock' on its surface, will trigger a toggling of a QWERTY keyboard between lower-case and upper-case keyboard input. Similarly, use of the 'function' key or 'control' key on modern personal computers causes keys to take on a myriad of functional abilities, depending on the program operating on the Personal Computer or PC.

In some cases of controlling a CPU, it is unnecessary to mark a key with any symbolic notation to indicate its purpose. This is most evident in many Automated Teller Machines (ATM). In such cases, the buttons are located adjacent to the display area such that when text appears adjacent to a given button, it is obvious, due to the proximity of the text to the button, what is the intended functionality of that button upon actuation. ATMs naturally, are very specific purpose machines, and so the arrangement of text to describe button functions varies according to a very predictable and limited program.

The category of hyperlink includes functional text, i.e. hypertext, or functional graphics. Each hyperlink has an associated function or hyperlink function. A hyperlink function may cause any change in the output or storage of any device operatively coupled to the CPU of the browser device. Hypertext is commonly used with the World Wide Web (WWW). Unlike ATMs, a functional text, or a graphic as found on the WWW, may appear anywhere on a display, and is seldom restricted to orderly columns or rows of presentation. More importantly, in a desktop environment, keys are so far from the display, that even if functional text or graphics were located at the periphery of the display, an average user might find it difficult to see a correlation between keys on a PC keyboard and displayed text or graphics.

Fortunately, many techniques for using pointing devices remove the need for such an arrangement. Even before mice were available, menus provided similar ability to call on functions. A menu, or submenu item, would have a precursor number, or letter, set apart from, or highlight within, functional text. A typical menu, once displayed, is operated in tandem with a input routine that permits a selection upon the occurrence of a single keystroke, wherein the selected function is denoted by the functional text of the menu item, and the operating key, by a single highlighted symbol therein.

The use of hypertext has become so advanced that today, routinely, hypertext is created in Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) such that displayed text, may operate as a doorway to additional functions by simply moving a cursor to the displayed text and clicking on it. Among the many features of HTML, when read by a compatible browser, is the ability to give hypertext a color of its own, to separate the text from non-functional text, and otherwise provide a pleasing color combination with other parts of a HTML page. The ability to specify the color of a link, within the HTML file, is done for aesthetic reasons so as to maintain a consistent theme through a family of HTML pages.

In a situation of handheld computers, sometimes embedded in mobile stations, such as mobile phones, the ATM-like keys are known as soft-keys. Like the ATM, the soft-keys are mounted very close to a display surface, e.g. about 1/4 inch. In contrast to a typical laptop -- the nearest keys on an IBM® ThinkPad are about 1 1/4 inch away from a display surface. Even though the mobile station has a minimal distance, many people are unable to make the connection between the softkey and the intended function displayed nearby. In such instances, much of the functionality of the mobile phone is hidden from the person using the phone.

Because a mobile station is used frequently as a personal communication device, it has versatility not present in wired phones. Consequently, the mobile station has been designed for use in all manner of conditions, including darkness. Thus the keypads are often designed to illuminate from within when entries are being made. Because the purpose has been to improve visibility of keys, the lighting is usually uniform to all keys, and has been monochromatic.

Since a hand-held unit, and in particular a mobile phone, must devote space for a 12-key keypad, the room allowed for a display is frequently small, e.g. about 5-6 lines of text. Although a mouse of diminutive proportions could be added using a J-key sensor, fine cursor movement through such a small screen would yield markedly

diminished results as compared to use with desktop sized monitors. None-the-less, requiring a user to use a cursor advance function, such as employed by the use of the 'tab' key in the popular text browser, LYNX, is inefficient, particularly as the operable choices start to exceed four. This becomes more taxing on the user of a
5 device when a keypad has key-sizes less than a quarter of the area of the DIN-standard form factor of computer keyboards.

Hence, a need exists for a selection method and apparatus to reduce repetitive keystrokes on hand-held devices that provide hyperlinks visible on a display. A need exists to form a visible link between a key on a keypad and a
10 hyperlink on a screen without crowding keys around the display. An ability to obtain greater functionality from a standard key layout is also needed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method and apparatus for selecting a function in an input device. A first function is displayed as a first depiction highlighted using a first color. A second function is displayed as a second hyperlink depiction highlighted using a second color. A color selection is made from among the first color and second color, which is detected by, e.g. a CPU. The CPU branches program execution to select a function based on the color selection.
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An embodiment of the invention may read a hypertext file or list, and assign colors to hyperlinks that are visible in the physical display of a device. Color assignment may override any color assignment in the native HTML for a hyperlink so that each hyperlink that points to a unique function has a unique color assigned to it, yet the hyperlink is depicted with a color that matches at least one key of a keypad.
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Also, assignment of color may be utilized in the creation of a data structure, e.g. a lookup table, indexed by color, and matching a function. Upon the selection of a color, the matching function is triggered by a CPU.
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An advantage provided by one or more embodiments of the invention is that highlighted portions of a display, and any corresponding function, may be selected by inputting a unique color associated with the function. This may be done with a single
30 keystroke, even though there may be many choices visible on the screen.

Among the many advantages of the present invention, one or more of the disclosed embodiments provides that each button of a handheld device may have a unique color, which matches a function listed on the display. Anyone who perceives
35 color can select a function from the keypad that matches the display.

Another advantage provided by one or more embodiments is that on a device controllable chiefly with buttons, a method is provided that permits selection of any listed item with a single keystroke, without the need to find a matching symbol to the listed item on a button. This is true even though there may be many listed items or hyperlinks.

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Another advantage provided by one or more embodiments is that recognition of a linkage between a button and a displayed function is improved so that people who are illiterate may still see the connection between a distant button and a displayed hyperlink depiction having a color in common with the button. Moreover, 10 persons with moderate sight impairment may better locate buttons having color from edge-to-edge, than locate one of several characters that appear on a button face..

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Another advantage provided by one or more embodiments is that there is no difficulty reading button colors, even though a device may be oriented upside down, with respect to characters printed on buttons.

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Another advantage provided by one or more embodiments is that the display, though it may be too full of links to see a positional correlation with nearby buttons, is still close enough to the buttons, that the button colors may be seen with peripheral vision. This permits a button selection that is accurate in terms of selecting the matching hyperlink depiction -- while never glancing away from the display.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The disclosed inventions will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, which show important sample embodiments of the invention, wherein:

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Fig. 1a is a representation of a formatted hyperlink file as it would appear if displayed to a screen having large dimensions;

Fig. 1b is a representation of a viewable window superimposed on a virtual screen, wherein the virtual screen is larger in all dimensions than the viewable window;

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Fig. 2 is a block diagram of a mobile station embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 3 is a flow chart of the steps performed by an embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 4a shows an example of some hyperlinks in a virtual screen;

Fig. 4b shows a view of some of a data structure that may hold the location information of the hyperlinks; and

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Fig. 5 shows the configuration of a keypad in relation to a display.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The numerous innovative teachings of the present application will be described with particular reference to the presently preferred embodiment. However, it should be understood that this class of embodiments provides only a few examples of the many advantageous uses of the innovative teachings herein. In general, statements made in the specification of the present application do not necessarily delimit any of the various claimed inventions. Moreover, some statements may apply to some inventive features but not to others.

Fig. 1a shows a representation of a formatted hyperlink file as it would appear if displayed to a screen having large dimensions. Since most formatted hyperlink files -- such as would be produced by a conventional desktop browser on a html file -- are suited for 'fat' browser capability, very frequently, a display on a mobile station is unable to show the entirety of the formatted hyperlink file. Under such circumstances, a mobile station may provide a 'scrolling' capability similar in effect to the scrolling performed on a conventional html page when it is not visible in the display area of a computer display. The excess formatted hyperlink file is called a virtual screen 100. The area of the virtual screen 100 that may be seen in the display of a device, such as, e.g. a mobile station, is called the viewable window 101. Fig. 1b shows a viewable window 111 that is so small that the excess of the virtual screen 110 extends beyond the left 112 and right edges 113 as well as the top 114 and bottom 115 edges of the viewable window.

The formatted hyperlink file, is more than raw hypertext, it is a representation, in the order and orientation, of text and graphics, that an author intended the file to have when viewed by human eyes. The formatted hyperlink file has a number of functional areas, which are often visible with specialized cues. As an example, Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) authors frequently use the default specialized cue of an underscore and blue coloring to identify functional area relating to some text. When presented by a browser using conventional HTML, an image can have a specialized cue, sometimes denoted by a blue border. In a general sense, these specialized cues are a highlight to the functional area, and have virtually always been a uniform color for a given formatted hyperlink file. A formatted hyperlink file may be a filtered version of HTML, such as produced by a Web Clipping Application (WCA). A formatted hyperlink file may very short and includes lists of functions displayed in a

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column.

Fig. 2 shows the hardware of a typical mobile station. The mobile station may be a mobile phone. The mobile station may be a personal digital assistant. An antenna 201 may be used to receive signals and transmit signals. Transceiver 203 may provide the ability to convert signals from analog to a digital baseband signal and from a digital baseband signal to analog. Processor or CPU 215 may receive data from the transceiver 203 and provide such data as analog or digital signals to output devices. An audio output or audio renderer 205 provides a sound output. Audio output 205 may take its input in analog or digital form from the processor 215. Processor may provide output to a display 207. The display 207 may be a LCD, LED a raster scanning device among others. Processor 215 may rely on storage 209 for occasional storage and retrieval of data. Such data may include information providing a context of a state machine, or other program. Such data may include audio or visual data in compressed or uncompressed formats.

Fig. 2 also shows some input devices. An actuating means 211 may include a device capable of detecting inputs along a two-dimensional plane, including keypads, touch-pads, graphic tablets and mice. Inputs may be converted to a digital signal and fed to the processor 215 for action in accordance with program control. In some cases, a input means may be overlaid over, or interspersed with some display elements, or illuminating means. Microphone 213 may provide voice control inputs to the processor 215. Microphone may provide a communication signal to the transceiver 203. Transceiver 203 may provide analog to digital conversion of voice signals from the microphone 213.

An embodiment of the invention, executing on a mobile station, performs the steps of Fig. 3. A formatted hyperlink file is obtained 301, either through a communications port, from another process or from local storage. A CPU on the browsing device parses 302 the formatted hyperlink file. A determination may be made at each delimiter, to see if a string of the formatted hyperlink file is a hyperlink 303. Such a method of determination is well known in the art. If the string is a hyperlink, then a determination is made of the position the link would appear in on a two-dimensional virtual screen 305. Such a position may be stored in a data structure, e.g. a list, having storage of the hyperlink string, a horizontal or x position, a vertical or y position. The steps of parsing, and list storing 305 may be executed iteratively until a end of file is detected 307.

The list may be sorted 309 left to right for each row, and then arranged so

that hyperlinks in rows positioned at larger 'y' positions are closer to the end of the list than hyperlinks in rows at smaller 'y' positions. The sorting of the sort step 309 may be in an order consistent with the way text is read by a person who reads from left to right. Sorting may also be consistent with an input device order. The input device order may be based on the arrangement of the actuating means, e.g. the order of keys 1 through 0 on a 12-button keypad in common use on telephones. A viewable window may be smaller than the virtual screen. In that case, a sub-list is created 313, wherein the sub-list organizes the visible hyperlinks depictions, i.e. the hyperlinks depictions appearing, at least in part, within the viewable window. A test may be made to determine if a hyperlink depiction appearing in the sub-list has an assigned color 317, that is a color selected by the CPU that overrides any color native to the formatted hyperlink file. A keypad color may be selected 319 that is among a set of keypad colors that are not assigned. Some hyperlinks may no longer be visible on the viewable window following input by a user to scroll the display. In that case the color assigned to the hyperlink may be added to a list of unallocated colors. The CPU controls the display to provide a color highlight 323 at the visible hyperlink. The visible hyperlink is a hyperlink depiction, and the arrangement of two or more hyperlink depictions on the viewable window is the depiction order. Such a color highlight may be controlled by modifying the formatted hyperlink file to embed a color tag to be associated with the hyperlink, wherein the color tag is interpreted by a browser program as a color similar to a keypad color. Alternatively, if a color tag already exists for the applicable hyperlink, the existing color tag may be modified to become a color similar to the keypad color. A color highlight may be at a hyperlink depiction when the color a) fills the hyperlink depiction; b) surrounds the hyperlink depiction; or c) is a continuous streak extending the substantial length of the hyperlink depiction, and nearby to the hyperlink depiction.

Once the keypad colors have been allocated to all hyperlinks on the viewable window, the browser device may enter a loop to obtain input 325, wherein it may poll circuits controlled by keypad keys having similar colors to the color of visible hyperlinks in order to detect a keypress. When such a keypad is pressed, a pressed keypad color or selected color is determined. The CPU detects the selected color. The pressed keypad color may operate as an index to lookup an associated hyperlink. Alternatively, the pressed keypad color may operate as an index to lookup an associated hyperlink functional. Execution 329 by the browser device then operates according to the hyperlink function of the associated hyperlink by means

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well known in the art. Any color allocations may be reallocated at this time.

Fig. 3a shows an example of some hyperlinks in a virtual screen 401. A viewable window 403 occupies the midsection of the virtual screen 401. Link D 411, Link E 412, Link F 413 and Link G 414 are all visible within the viewable window 403.

Fig. 4b shows a view of some of a data structure that may hold the location information of the hyperlinks 451. Coordinate information 452 may be included, using the row and column of the link. A button label 453 and color association 454 pair may be associated dynamically to a hyperlink name 451. Associations for the current viewable window show the association 476 of link D 456 with color red 466. An association 477 of link E 457 may be made with color yellow 467. An association 478 of link F 458 may be made with color green 468. An association 479 of link G 459 may be made with color light purple 469. Such associations and lists may be made using tables, pointers, or other means known in the art. Other data may be included in the data structure. Following selection of colors by step 319 of Fig. 3, associations are made between each hyperlink visible within the viewable window and a color assigned to a keypad button.

The operation of the flowchart of Fig. 3 suggests that a color highlighting assignment to a bit of text or graphics may persist as a user scrolls a viewable window up and down. An alternative embodiment may reallocate colors based on the position or zone that a hyperlink moves to following a scroll operation. A zone may be a row of characters. Such a zone approach would entail reassigning a color of a hyperlink as the hyperlink rises in the viewable window, i.e. while the link is in the lower quarter of the window, assign a color of the lowermost row of buttons, which includes light blue 499. The next higher quarter of the screen, may then have links highlighted with colors selected among the colors of the '7', '8' and '9' buttons. Rising still further into the third highest quarter of the screen, colors associated with the '4', '5', and '6' buttons might be used. And finally, when a hyperlink is scrolled to the highest part of the viewable window, colors associated with the '1', '2' and '3' buttons may be used. A shift from one zone to the next, would entail providing a new color hyperlink depiction, and re-mapping the button that is associated with the function of the hyperlink.

Fig. 4 shows the display area 501 in combination with a keypad input device 503 of a mobile station. In the display area 501 which shows a viewable window of an associated file, are four hypertext links; one that triggers display of information

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concerning "wireless future" 511; one that triggers display of information concerning "Menzies J Mode" 512; one that triggers display of information concerning

"Commercial Sites" 513; and one that triggers display of information concerning

"Yahoo! And others" 514, wherein each of the hypertext links color match: the one

5 key 521; the two key 522; the three key 523 and the four key 524, respectively. Each key of the keypad may be large enough to fall within the peripheral vision of a user.

The peripheral range 550 is the angular distance from the direction of view wherein a user may gaze directly at the display area 501 and be able to select a colored button of sufficient size according to the color desired -- without the need to adjust gaze.

10 The range, naturally, may be larger for a colored button that has a larger size, as

compared to a button of smaller size. The peripheral range may vary from user to user and may be measured while the display and buttons are at a distance from an eye that is typical of a user holding the device containing the display and buttons.

15 In an embodiment of the invention, a browser device has color-coded keypad, wherein the occurrence of a key-press or a key release may be detectable at a CPU. The color code may be on the key or button, or in an adjacent area to the key or button.

20 An alternative embodiment would provide lighting to each keypad button such that a color of the button may be selected. The color may be selected by a CPU by closing a circuit to one or more different colored LEDs positioned near a keypad button.

25 Although the invention has been described in the context of particular embodiments, it will be realized that a number of modifications to these teachings may occur to one skilled in the art. The embodiments may operate within a number

of different packages, e.g. a mobile phone, pager, or electronic organizer. A number of input devices could be used to detect color inputs, including any device that detects finger placement, or the coordinates of a stylus tip. Thus, while the invention has been particularly shown and described with respect to specific embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that changes in form and

30 configuration may be made therein without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention.